

Please amend the Specification as follows:

**[0048]** In a preferred method, deionized (DI) water, maintained at a controlled temperature, is sprayed onto a wafer surface simultaneously with the delivery of anhydrous HF gas into the process chamber. The anhydrous HF gas dissolves in the DI water, causing the anhydrous HF gas to become aggressive toward the silicon dioxide on the-wafer surface. The anhydrous HF gas, mixed with water, etches the silicon dioxide film on the wafer surface. The etch product ( $\text{SiF}_4$ ) may then be evolved as a gas and removed via a system exhaust, or may be dissolved in an aqueous carrier liquid. The wafer may be rotated to promote uniform distribution of the boundary layer, as well as helping to define the thickness of the boundary layer through centrifugal force.